

Message Text

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ORIGIN EA-10

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TO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK IMMEDIATE

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TAGS: MARR, TH

SUBJECT: U.S. FORCE REDUCTIONS IN THAILAND

REF: A. STATE 47633; B. BANGKOK 3618

1. THERE WAS ONLY ONE QUESTION AT THE MARCH 4 NOON
BRIEFING ON THE SENI GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSAL TO WITHDRAW
ALL U.S. FORCES WITHIN 18 MONTHS:

Q. BOB, IS THERE ANY COMMENT TODAY ON THE THAILAND
REQUEST FOR TERMINATION OF THE PRESENCE OF AMERICAN TROOPS
AND BASES?

A. WELL, FRANKLY, I CANNOT ADD ANYTHING TO WHAT I SAID
YESTERDAY HERE. WE HAVE HAD NO DISCUSSIONS WITH THE
GOVERNMENT, WHICH IS STILL IN THE PROCESS OF FORMING
ITSELF. OBVIOUSLY WE WILL BE DISCUSSING WITH THE THAI
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GOVERNMENT OUR MILITARY RELATIONSHIP WITH THAT GOVERNMENT.

BUT I CAN CONFIRM TO YOU WHAT I SAID YESTERDAY. I SAID YESTERDAY I THOUGHT THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO DISCUSSIONS WITH THE GOVERNMENT ON THIS SUBJECT. AND I CAN DEFINITELY CONFIRM THAT, THAT THERE HAVE BEEN NO DISCUSSIONS. IN FACT, WE HAVE NOT HAD ANY DISCUSSIONS BECAUSE THE GOVERNMENT HAS NOT BEEN FORMED YET.

2. THERE FOLLOW Q'S AND A'S PROVIDED FOR THE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN'S USE IN RESPONDING TO POSSIBLE QUESTIONS:

Q. WERE WE SURPRISED BY THE ANNOUNCEMENT THAT THE SENI GOVERNMENT WANTS ALL U.S. FORCES OUT OF THAILAND WITHIN 18 MONTHS?

A. THE THAI PARLIAMENT HAS NOT YET GIVEN PRIME MINISTER- DESIGNATE SENI PRAMOT'S CABINET A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE. UNTIL IT DOES SO, IT WOULD BE INAPPROPRIATE FOR ME TO COMMENT UPON THIS POLICY PROPOSAL. I SHOULD POINT OUT HOWEVER BOTH THE U.S. AND THAI GOVERNMENTS HAVE FAVORED REDUCING THE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN THAILAND AS THE SITUATION IN THE AREA PERMITS.

FYI: FOLLOWING NATIONAL ELECTIONS JANUARY 25, THE THAI PARLIAMENT DESIGNATED SENI PRAMOT TO FORM A GOVERNMENT. HE SUBSEQUENTLY NAMED A CABINET BASED ON HIS OWN DEMOCRAT AND SOCIAL AGRARIAN PARTIES, WHICH COMMAND 91 SEATS IN THE PARLIAMENT (135 WOULD CONSTITUTE A MAJORITY). THE KING HAS SWORN IN THE CABINET BUT ITS FINAL TEST IS A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE IN THE PARLIAMENT (SCHEDULED FOR MARCH 6) ON ITS POLICIES. END FYI.

Q. DOES THAT MEAN THERE WERE NO ADVANCE CONSULTATIONS?

A. REGULAR CONSULTATIONS HAVE BEEN HELD WITH THE THAI IN THE PAST, BUT WE HAVE NOT MET FORMALLY WITH THAI GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES SINCE JANUARY 22. NATIONAL ELECTIONS WERE HELD ON JANUARY 26, AND THE THAI HAVE BEEN PRE-OCCUPIED SINCE IN TRYING TO FORM A GOVERNMENT.

Q. WHAT WERE THE REASONS FOR THE THAI DECISION TO ASK LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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US TO WITHDRAW?

A. AS I SAID EARLIER, SINCE THE ANNOUNCEMENT DOES NOT YET REPRESENT OFFICIAL THAI POLICY, IT WOULD BE INAPPROPRIATE FOR ME TO COMMENT UPON IT.

Q. WHAT DO WE PLAN TO DO ABOUT THIS DEVELOPMENT?

A. UNTIL A THAI GOVERNMENT ACTUALLY HAS BEEN CONFIRMED, THERE IS LITTLE WE CAN OR SHOULD DO. WE WOULD EXPECT TO DISCUSS OUR PLANS WITH THE THAI ONCE A GOVERNMENT IS IN PLACE. I MIGHT ADD THAT OUR FORCES IN THAILAND ARE THERE AT THAI INVITATION AND THAT THEIR CONTINUED PRESENCE AND THEIR NUMBER ARE DEPENDENT ON MUTUAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN OURSELVES AND THE THAI.

Q. DOES THAT MEAN WE WOULD LEAVE IF THEY ASKED US TO DO SO?

A. THE CONTINUED PRESENCE OF OUR FORCES IS DEPENDENT ON MUTUAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN OURSELVES AND THE THAI.

Q. DO WE HAVE PLANS TO WITHDRAW WITHIN 18 MONTHS?

A. UNTIL WE HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS OUR MILITARY PRESENCE WITH THE THAI, THERE IS NO PURPOSE TO BE SERVED BY DISCUSSION WHAT OUR PLANS MAY OR MAY NOT BE.

Q. WHAT KIND OF A PRESENCE DO WE HAVE IN THAILAND?

A. I WILL REFER YOU TO THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE FOR SPECIFIC DETAILS. MOST OF OUR PRESENCE IS AIR FORCE LOCATED AT FOUR MAJOR BASES. THE NUMBER OF AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL IS ABOUT 27,000 AND THERE ARE APPROXIMATELY 350 AIRCRAFT IN COUNTRY. OUR CURRENT MILITARY PRESENCE IS A REDUCTION OF THE PEAK OF 46,000 MEN WE HAD THERE IN 1972. KISSINGER

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